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ABSTRACT

This review summarizes the recommendations of the President's Commission on School Finance and provides an annotated listing of the 34 project reports. The conclusions and recommendations are discussed under the following areas of concern: (1) establishing the preminence of State government in education, (2) initiating full State funding of elementary and secondary education, (3) strengthening State administration of education, (4) saving the inner-city schools, (5) promoting early childhood education, (6) affirming public interest in nonpublic schools, (7) making the educational system accountable, (8) relating education to career needs, (9) creating school districts with balanced resources, (10) exploring innovations and new alternatives, and (11) asserting the national interest in education. (Author)

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ERIC/CEM Special Feature

The President's Commission On School Finance

by Philip K. Piele

"The financial problems of education derive largely from the evolving inabilities of the States to create and maintain systems that provide equal educational opportunities and quality education to all their children."

On March 3, 1970, President Nixon issued Executive Order 11513 appointing an eighteen-member commission to study and report on "future revenue needs and resources of the Nation's public and nonpublic elementary and secondary schools." Some specific subjects the president requested the commission to study include the adequacy of the existing tax base and structure for the support of public schools, the fiscal status of nonpublic schools and ways they can be assisted, the inequities in educational expenditures among states and school systems, and the measurement of the results of schooling.

Defining itself "as a deliberative body rather than as another research agency," the commission assembled a staff trained to manage the complex task of gathering, organizing, and consolidating the vast pool of information with which the commission would have to deal. A large part of the commission's work involved interviewing key personnel at local, state, and federal levels of government and education together with representatives from private and public organizations whose advice and opinions would be of assistance. Through surveys the commission made an effort to determine the views of people who make and implement educational policies, including governors, legislators, superintendents, and school board members.

To obtain additional research data, the commission engaged outside contractors—including academic institutions, research organizations, government agencies, and educational consultants—to produce thirty-four project reports. These reports addressed themselves to five broad areas of investigation:

- Who is responsible for running schools and school systems and how is this responsibility exercised?
- Who pays for the schools and who gets the money?
- How do school systems operate and how effective are they?
- How do nonpublic schools participate in the educational system?
- How available are adequate statistical data regarding what is happening?

On March 3, 1972, the commission submitted its report. Stressing that education is a dynamic process capable of change, the commission issued eleven recommendations that provide a framework for the practical reform of every major aspect of financing education in our society. The recommendations are summarized in the following review. In addition, an annotated listing of the thirty-four project reports is included at the end of the review.

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1. Establishing the Preeminence of State Government in Education

For both practical and constitutional reasons, the commission concludes that educational reform—including its design, finance, and implementation—is primarily a state responsibility. States, according to the commission, are responsible for raising and allocating education funds and for evaluating their application. Local boards, seen as "instrumentalities" of the state, are given wide latitude within state guidelines to administer these funds.

Commission remarks make it clear that a substantive reenforcing of state administrative machinery must not preclude the fundamental rights of local citizens. Local boards should be held accountable to taxpayers, parents, and students, as well as to the state.

"Without strong State intervention in education, things cannot go well in the Nation's schools.

Nor may national requirements and interests be ignored. The commission recommends that the federal government maintain a leadership and pioneering role in the establishment of long-range educational policies, but assume only a supplementary role to the states in financing school capital and operating costs.

2. Initiating Full State Funding of Elementary and Secondary Education

Recent court decisions questioning the use of property taxes to finance education and the present inequities in all methods of raising and distributing local education funds make it clear that state governments must assume primary responsibility for initiating and implementing fiscal reform in education. In support of this assertion, the commission recommends that, to insure more equitable revenue distribution and to separate educational needs from exclusively fiscal considerations, the state assume full responsibility for financing all nonfederal programs in elementary and secondary education.

"To offer children only equal education, disregarding differences in their circumstances, is merely to maintain or perhaps even to magnify the relative efforts of advantage and handicap. Equal treatment of unequals does not produce equality."

To provide local districts with some financial flexibility, however, the commission suggests that local school districts be allowed to supplement state funds to a maximum of 10 percent. This limit is set to avoid the possibility of any return to present educational disparities among local school districts. The commission also approved some budgetary differentials among districts based, for example, on such things as the higher cost of programs for handicapped and disadvantaged students and on natural variations in educational costs across a single state.

3. Strengthening State Administration of Education

Consistent with its advocacy of a strong state role in the financing of education, the commission recommends that governors and legislatures take vigorous steps to strengthen the organization and staffing of the education-related components of their executive and legislative branches. "What every State must do will vary," says the commission, "but it is imperative that every State act."

Governors should be empowered, where not already so authorized, to select the members of the state board of education, who in turn should elect the state's chief education officer. At the same time, there must be a continuous flow of information between state education officials and their governor and legislature. Legislative committees must receive accurate information regarding the current status of education in their state. And the public must be clearly informed of its educational systems and their administrative organizations. In such a framework the commission sees the foundations from which necessary reforms might be dynamically and consistently pursued.

The commission warns, however, against the proliferation of federal funding of programs and recommends that, wherever possible, federal funds be directed through state agencies. By this measure, the general allocation of monies might be clarified, thereby enhancing the flow of information, reducing educational disparities among separate districts, and avoiding unnecessary antagonisms between state and federal officials responsible for various programs.

"Real estate is no longer the fundamental measure of the ability of people to pay for government services or of their need for them."

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4. Saving the Inner-City Schools

With the convergence of financial and racial problems in big-city schools, both state and federal governments must give high priority to revitalizing urban education. To this end, the commission outlines a federally sponsored Urban Educational Assistance Program to provide funds on a matching basis for at least five years to public and nonpublic school projects dealing with problems of urban education. Such funds could be used for the renovation and replacement of equipment and facilities, the provision of instructional materials and services, and the addition of professionals and supporting personnel for remedial, bilingual, and special education.

Further, the commission encourages state and local agencies to explore the concept of a community school program whereby "educational facilities become community facilities as well." In affirming the merits of such a program, the commission anticipates that parents and other interested citizens, together with community social agencies, can make use of school facilities and actively participate in the ongoing process of urban renewal and change.

5. Promoting Early Childhood Education

It has been shown that preprimary learning programs greatly enhance the educational achievement of children in conventional K-12 school systems. This is true particularly in the case of the disadvantaged student. Here the commission finds that where preprimary educational programs work closely with the child's family unit, much headway can be made in reducing social, economic, and physical disparities.

> *"The conviction that class size has an important or even a measurable effect on educational quality cannot presently be supported by evidence."*

Substantial justification is noted for a group-administered program of preprimary education for four- and five-year old children. Although there is some research evidence to support a socialization program for three-year old children, there is little information on how best to manage such a program. There is, however, a strong need for the education of parents with children under three years old. The need to expand research and demonstration projects providing complete medical, psychological, social, and educational diagnostic services for children prior to their entry into preprimary programs offers another chance to bring school and community closer together. The commission also urges the development of staff training models for such programs.

The commission further suggests that high schools provide day care services for a large number of children. Not only would the program provide a valuable community service, but high school students would be educated as future parents. The commission encourages employers to invest in similar programs for their employees.

Against this background, the commission generally advises state and local agencies to promote preprimary programs beginning at age four and recommends that the federal government provide incentives to achieve this end.

6. Affirming Public Interest in Nonpublic Schools

Nonpublic schools continue to serve a vital function in our society. In addition to providing diversity and a healthy alternative to the public schools, nonpublic schools enable many Americans to express themselves ethnically, culturally, socially, and religiously. And because nonpublic schools are largely an urban phenomenon, their closing would place a heavy burden on already inadequate public schools in many large cities. But while the commission strongly supports the continued need for nonpublic schools, the realities of current legal restrictions on public assistance to nonpublic schools greatly diminish the force of its affirmation.

State and federal funds should be provided, wherever constitutionally permissible, for such public benefits to nonpublic students as nutritional and health services, transportation, textbooks, library resources, and various therapeutic and remedial services. Also, more substantive assistance programs such as tax credits, tax deductions for tuition, tuition reimbursements, and equitable sharing in federally supported programs should receive serious consideration. Dissenting commission members note, however, that such assistance programs are not likely to be permitted under existing judicial restraints.

> *"Closing of urban nonpublic schools can damage not only already decaying public schools, but also increase the racial isolation of inner city neighborhoods."*

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7. Making the Educational System Accountable

To provide accurate and uniform indexes of educational effectiveness, the commission encourages statewide evaluation systems that can both measure inschool progress and assess the job productivity or higher educational success of high school graduates. Techniques must also be developed for communicating the results of such evaluations to the public without jeopardizing either students or teachers.

"If teachers are able to negotiate their pay and workload, they should be obligated to submit output measures."

Seeking again to strengthen the relationship between the school and the community, the commission stresses the need for the public to be clearly informed as to what its schools can or cannot do. Research has not shown any variation in student achievement that can be definitely related to such traditional standards as class size or teacher-student ratios; therefore, administrators are warned against the use of these standards as determinants of budget or staff allocations.

To increase the flexibility of the educational process, accountability techniques should be developed to define the relationship between educational resources and effective schooling. Such techniques should identify the relative costs and benefits of various programs, thereby assisting the administrator in deciding among the organizational alternatives for any given situation.

8. Relating Education to Career Needs

Finding that insufficient attention is given to those 40 percent of graduating high school students who do not continue on to college, the commission urges vigorous action to raise the status of vocational education to the level of college preparatory programs. Accordingly, it suggests a pyramid-shaped career education program whereby elementary schools describe a wide spectrum of career options and supply an understanding of their relative societal roles, junior high schools explore specific clusters of occupations, and senior high schools provide preparatory experience for specific fields.

To combat unemployment resulting from technological change, the program should be organized around career clusters representing basic long-term societal functions. Although separate jobs within a particular trade may be phased out, the trade as a whole will continue to produce employment opportunities. A student familiar with a given cluster will require minimum retraining to permit his moving into an emerging job.

"The assumption that vocational preparation and academic education are somehow incompatible is a notion that this country should work hard to dispel."

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9. Creating School Districts with Balanced Resources

Equality of educational quality and opportunity cannot be sustained where school children are ethnically or economically isolated. Commission findings indicate that equal education is best attained where student populations are heterogeneously organized and where districts are large enough to encompass a distribution of wealth comparable to that of the entire state. Unfortunately, a district large enough to provide a full range of educational services is often too large to maintain effective communication with parents and students.

The commission recommends that states reorganize their school districts to "encompass within each one, wherever possible, children of diverse economic, racial, and social backgrounds." Although the commission does not attempt to deal directly with the issue of racial integration, it does question the wisdom of imposing uniform ratios of racial balance in all schools in a given district. In addition, it sees busing as a viable, though not uniformly necessary, means of achieving both district reorganization and racial balance.

"It is increasingly apparent that busing to produce a uniform racial ratio in all the schools of a district may not be the best procedure."

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10. Exploring Innovations and New Alternatives

The commission affirms the need for continued innovation in educational methodology and for diversification of educational offerings by both public and private interests within the limits of available resources. It warns against the premature assessment of program results on the basis of budgetary pressures, emphasizing that education is a dynamic process with both tangible and intangible outcomes and that experimentation requires time and patience for results to occur.

There is a serious need for the development of innovative methods to select and train school personnel. Interaction between teachers-in-training and the communities they are to serve should be increased, including the recruitment of teachers who have lived in the areas in which they will teach and

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"To the extent that alternative schools succeed where other schools fail, they should command the attention of all school people, and obstacles to their continued operation ought to be removed."

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who have an understanding of the particular ethnic, social, and economic conditions influencing the students. In addition, appropriate and equitable measures must be developed to phase out less competent teachers.

Other recommendations made by the commission include the stimulation of instructional technology, the encouragement of alternative school experiments, the funding of demonstration projects in the use of educational vouchers and performance contracting, the expanded use of educational facilities, and the appropriate use of differentiated staffing.

11. Asserting the National Interest in Education

The commission's final recommendation calls for a sharper focus on national educational policy. To attain that end, it makes several suggestions: the creation of a National Educational Policy Development Council "to assess the relationship between education and major social, cultural, and economic problems . . . and to give continuing attention to education as a fundamental national concern"; the allocation of federal funds for educating economically disadvantaged children "according to the relative concentration of these children within school systems"; the appropriation of federal funds in time to permit adequate instructional planning on the part of recipient schools; the supplementation by federal funds of state funding of needed educational reforms; and the achievement of greater flexibility in the use of federal funds by consolidating diverse aid programs through educational revenue sharing.

The commission's final report, detailing its findings and recommendations, is available from the U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402: **Schools, People & Money. The Need for Educational Reform.** PR 37.8: SCH 6/SCH 6/3, $1.00.

Project Reports

Abstracts of the commission reports appear in the May 1972 issue of *Research in Education*. Complete texts of the reports are available from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). To order copies, indicate the "ED" number of each document and the type of reproduction desired—hard copy (HC) or microfiche (MF). Payment must accompany orders under $10.00. Postage, at book rate or library rate, is included in the price of the document. If first class mailing is desired or if shipment is outside the continental United States, the difference between book rate or library rate and first class or foreign postage will be billed at cost. All orders must be in writing. Address requests to ERIC Document Reproduction Service, P.O. Drawer O, Bethesda, Maryland 20014.

Vlaanderen, Russell B., and Lindman, Erick L. **Intergovernmental Relations and the Governance of Education.** Denver: Education Commission of the States, 1971. 194 pages. ED 058 474 MF $0.65 HC $6.58. Discusses the roles of each level of government—federal, state, and local—in providing quality education and equal educational opportunity.

Falcon, James C. **What State Legislators Think about School Finance.** Princeton, New Jersey: Educational Testing Service, 1972. 162 pages. ED 058 475 MF $0.65 HC $6.58. Surveys attitudes of the chairmen of the state legislative education committees concerning possible changes in educational finance and governance.

Goffman, Irving J., and others. **The Concept of Education as an Investment. Final Report.** 1971. 119 pages. ED 058 476 MF $0.65 HC $6.58. Reports on the economic benefits and investment functions of education and the relationship to other human resource investments. Also includes a report on the revenue yields of various taxes related to economic conditions.

Myers, Will S., and others. **State-Local Revenue Systems and Educational Finance.** Washington, D.C.: Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, 1971. 260 pages. ED 058 477 MF $0.65 HC $9.87. Reports how state and local revenue systems for education function.

Levin, Betsy, and others. **Public School Finance: Present Disparities and Fiscal Alternatives. Volume I.** Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 1972. 326 pages. ED 058 478 MF $0.65 HC $13.16. Determines the nature and extent of disparities in revenues and expenditures among selected states and among types of districts within and across these states.

Levin, Betsy, and others. **Public School Finance: Present Disparities and Fiscal Alternatives. Volume II: Analysis of Individual States.** Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 1972. 187 pages. ED 058 479 MF $0.65 HC $6.58. Provides detailed information on eight states to illustrate various levels of state support of public schools, present disparities in raising and distributing funds, and a test of alternative models for redistributing tax burdens and educational expenditures.

Jones, Thomas H. **Review of Existing State School Finance Programs. Volume I: A Commission Staff Report.** Washington, D.C.: President's Commission on School Finance, 1971. 166 pages. ED 058 480 MF $0.65 HC $6.58. Studies operation of existing state school finance formulas.

Barr, Richard, and others. **Review of Existing State School Finance Programs. Volume II: Documentation of Disparities in the Financing of Public Elementary and Secondary School Systems, by State. A Commission Staff Report.** Washington, D.C.: President's Commission on School Finance, 1971. 218 pages. ED 058 481 MF $0.65 HC $9.87. Documents disparities in per pupil expenditures and revenue in each state.

Wise, Arthur E. **The Foundation Program and Educational Needs: A Conceptual Analysis.** Chicago: Graduate School of Education, University of Chicago, 1971. 24 pages. ED 058 482 MF $0.65 HC $3.29. Analyzes differences between the "foundation program" and educational needs, related to the distribution of school funds.

Whelan, Charles M., and Freund, Paul A. **Legal and Constitutional Problems of Public Support for Nonpublic Schools.** New York: School of Law, Fordham University, 1971. 110 pages. ED 058 483 MF $0.65 HC $6.58. Reviews basic legal and constitutional issues facing public aid to nonpublic schools.

Educational Inquiry, Inc. **Schooling for the Future: Toward Quality and Equality in American Precollegiate Education.** Los Angeles: 1971. 609 pages. ED 058 497 MF $0.65 HC $23.03. Studies educational change and innovation, focusing on changes in purposes, procedures, and institutional arrangements needed to improve educational quality.

Tickton, Sidney G., and Kohn, Sherwood Davidson. **The New Instructional Technologies: Are They Worth It? A Statement and a Technical Report.** Washington, D.C.: Academy for Educational Development, Inc., 1971. 110 pages. ED 058 498 MF $0.65 HC $6.58. Reviews educational technological innovations, their costs, and effectiveness.

Cooper, Bruce S. **Free and Freedom Schools. A National Survey of Alternative Programs. A Report.** Washington, D.C.: President's Commission on School Finance, 1971. 145 pages. ED 058 499 MF $0.65 HC $6.58. Surveys alternative schools and educational programs.

Cresap, McCormick and Paget, Inc. **Economies in Education.** New York: 1971. 269 pages. ED 058 500 MF $0.65 HC $9.87. Reports possible approaches to greater economies in education.

Maxwell, James A., and others. **Tax Credits for Education.** Washington, D.C.: 1971. 60 pages. ED 058 501 MF $0.65 HC $3.29. Analyzes the potential use of tax credits to finance elementary and secondary education.

Goettel, Robert J., and others. **Improving Information Systems for Educational Policy Making.** Syracuse, New York: Policy Institute, Syracuse University Research Corporation, 1971. 233 pages. ED 058 502 MF $0.65 HC $9.87. Reports on educational data inadequacies and recommendations for improving information systems for educational policy-making.

Froomkin, Joseph, and others. **Population, Enrollment, and Costs of Public Elementary and Secondary Education 1975-76 and 1980-81. A Report.** Washington, D.C.: 1971. 331 pages. ED 058 503 MF $0.65 HC $13.16. Projects enrollments in nursery, elementary, and secondary schools through 1980.

Froomkin, Joseph, and others. **Estimates and Projections of Special Target Group Populations in Elementary and Secondary Public Schools. A Report.** Washington, D.C.: Joseph Froomkin, Inc., 1972. 104 pages. ED 058 504 MF $0.65 HC $6.58. Projects special target group populations in elementary and secondary schools.

Sklar, Sigmund L. **In Search of a Rational Basis for Measuring Disparities. (A Review of Per-Pupil Expenditure Makeup.)** Washington, D.C.: President's Commission on School Finance, 1971. 126 pages. ED 058 505 MF $0.65 HC $6.58. Reviews methods used to calculate education expenditures per pupil and recommends changes.

Sklar, Sigmund L., and Ioup, William E. **A Prototype National Educational Finance Planning Model. Projections of Educational Needs, Resources and Disparities under Various Forecasting and Policy Assumptions.** Washington, D.C.: President's Commission on School Finance, 1971. 204 pages. ED 058 506 MF $0.65 HC $9.87. Describes a simulation model designed to test the fiscal implications of varied sets of assumptions and policies relating to changes in educational needs and resources over the next decade.

Weinstein, Bernard L., and others. **Selected Staff Studies in Elementary and Secondary School Finance. Four Study Papers.** Washington, D.C.: President's Commission on School Finance, 1971. 96 pages. ED 058 507 MF $0.65 HC $3.29. Analyzes performance contracting, educational vouchers, potential federal revenue sources for education, listing of federal educational programs, and the status of nonpublic education.

Fahey, Frank J. **Economic Problems of Nonpublic Schools.** South Bend, Indiana: Office of Educational Research, University of Notre Dame, 1971. 669 pages. ED 058 484 MF $0.65 HC $23.03. Studies economic factors affecting enrollment trends and the effects of nonpublic school closings on public schools, and projects enrollment and financial trends in nonpublic schools through 1980.

Cohen, Wilbur J., and others. **The Financial Implications of Changing Patterns of Nonpublic School Operations in Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee, and Philadelphia. A Report.** Ann Arbor: School of Education, University of Michigan, 1971. 246 pages. ED 058 485 MF $0.65 HC $9.87. Studies the effects of nonpublic school closings in selected communities.

Erickson, Donald A., and Madaus, George F. **Issues of Aid to Nonpublic Schools. Volume I: Economic and Social Issues of Educational Pluralism.** Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts: Center for Field Research and School Services, Boston College, 1971. 823 pages. ED 058 486 MF $0.65 HC $29.61. Presents results of studies of two projects: (1) the current and potential economic and social contributions of nonpublic schools and the potential for increased cooperation between public and nonpublic schools, and (2) a review and assessment of public assistance programs for nonpublic schools.

Donovan, John D., and others. **Issues of Aid to Nonpublic Schools. Volume II: The Social and Religious Sources of the Crisis in Catholic Schools.** Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts: Center for Field Research and School Services, Boston College, 1971. 123 pages. Ed 058 487 MF $0.65 HC $6.58. Identifiies factors responsible for the crisis in Catholic schools throughout the United States.

Erickson, Donald A., and Madaus, George F. **Issues of Aid to Nonpublic Schools. Volume III: Public Assistance Programs for Nonpublic Schools.** Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts: Center for Field Research and School Services, Boston College, 1971. 778 pages. ED 058 488 MF $0.65 HC $26.32. Outlines a variety of public aid programs at federal, state, and local levels available to nonpublic schools.

Erickson, Donald A., and Madaus, George F. **Issues of Aid to Nonpublic Schools. Volume IV: Appendices.** Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts: Center for Field Research and School Services, Boston College, 1971. 740 pages. ED 058 489 MF $0.65 HC $26.32. Reports on the role of the federal government in rendering financial aid to nonpublic schools.

Erickson, Donald A., and Madaus, George F. **Issues of Aid to Nonpublic Schools. Summary Analysis.** Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts: Center for Field Research and School Services, Boston College, 1971. 37 pages. ED 058 490 MF $0.65 HC $3.29. Summarizes the four-volume study identifying the social benefits to the nation made by nonpublic schools, the public aid programs for nonpublic schools, the attendant obligations of nonpublic schools receiving aid, and the problems and accomplishments of nonpublic schools.

Foerster, Janet Shedd. **Public Aid to Nonpublic Education.** Washington, D.C.: President's Commission on School Finance, 1971. 98 pages. ED 058 491 MF $0.65 HC $3.29. Compiles federal, state, and local aid available to nonpublic schools, with emphasis on state-aid programs.

Erickson, Donald A., and Donovan, John D. **The Three R's of Nonpublic Education in Louisiana: Race, Religion, and Region.** 1972. 335 pages. ED 058 492 MF $0.65 HC $13.16. Studies the recent trends in nonpublic education in Louisiana including the interaction between public and nonpublic schools.

Kennedy, Joseph C. **Big City Schools in America: The Views of Superintendents and School Board Presidents.** Washington, D.C.: Mark Battle Associates, Inc., 1971. 66 pages. ED 058 493 MF $0.65 HC $3.29. Surveys the attitudes of big-city school superintendents and school board officials concerning the operations of their schools.

Iannaccone, Laurence. **Problems of Financing Inner City Schools. Political, Social, and Cultural Constraints upon Financing Improved Urban Education and Proposals to Overcome Them. A Report.** Columbus, Ohio: Research Foundation, Ohio State University, 1971. 69 pages. ED 058 494 MF $0.65 HC $3.29. Studies the problems of financing inner-city schools and alternatives for dealing with the problems.

Averch, Harvey A., and others. **How Effective Is Schooling? A Critical Review and Synthesis of Research Findings.** Santa Monica, California: The Rand Corporation, 1971. 249 pages. ED 058 495 MF $0.65 HC $9.87. Reviews the state of the art for measuring educational effectiveness, including an analysis of the relationship of educational resources to achievement.

Colmen, Joseph G., and Sandoval, Corazon. **Pre-Primary Education: Needs, Alternatives and Costs, 1971-1980.** Washington, D.C.: Education and Public Affairs, Inc., 1971. 168 pages. ED 058 496 MF $0.65 HC $6.58. Analyzes present efforts toward education of preschoolers.